

חול המועד

סוכות

Chol HaMo'ed Sukkot

Shemot / Exodus 33:12-34:26, Ezekiel 38:18-39:16

Is Faithfulness Required for Eternal Life?

יב וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה רְאֵה אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר-תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי וְאֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יֵדְעֵתִיךָ בְּשֵׁם וְגַם-מִצְאָתָהּ חֵן בְּעֵינָיִי יֵג וְעַתָּה אִם-נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדַעְנִי נָא אֶת-דַּרְכְּךָ וְאֶדְעָה לְמַעַן אֲמַצָּא-חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְרָאֵה כִּי: *33:12 Then Moses said to the Lord, 'See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.'* *33:13 'Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.'* *33:14 And He said, 'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.'* (NASB) After the tragedy of the sin of the golden calf, Moshe feared that the people would never be able to find favor in God's eyes again. In the Ohel Moed (Tent of Meeting) Moshe sought for assurance from the Lord that He would go with these people. In the context of the great sin of Israel, Moshe asked, *33:13 'Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor (חֵן, grace) in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor (חֵן, grace) in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.'* (NASB) Moshe speaks of

finding favor, mercy, and grace in the eyes of the Lord. He speaks of knowing God in order to find grace (favor) in his sight. This knowing God by knowing His ways is the concept of “*faithfulness*.” The question then is for us, “*Is faithfulness required for Eternal Life?*” Does this question stand contrary to what we are being taught in the church today? *Rashi on Exodus 33:13 part 2*, states “*וְאֵדָעָה לְמַעַן אֶמְצָא-יְיָ* *בְּעֵינָיִךְ, that I may know by this (by Your letting me know Your way) the nature of the reward You bestow, what is this “finding of grace” which You have granted to me (Hebrew: which I found in Your eyes). The explanation of וְאֵדָעָה לְמַעַן אֶמְצָא-יְיָ accordingly is: that I may find out (אמצא) how great is the reward attendant on this “finding of grace.”* Grace (יָן or חֶסֶד in the Christian belief) is defined as the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings. Mercy (יָן or חֶסֶד) is also defined as compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm. The rabbis understand the concept of grace as the favor of God and is something that is coupled to what we do as it is related to the Torah command. A statistical analysis of the Masoretic text reveals יָן chen is translated to “*grace*” 38 times in the King James Bible and is also translated with the meanings of “*favor,*” “*beauty,*” and “*loveliness.*” In 40 of the 69 occurrences in the Tanach, the word יָן it is found in the phrase, “*find grace/favor in the eyes of ...,*” for example, its first use is in *Bereshit / Genesis 6:8*, וַיִּנְחַח מֹצֵא יְיָ בְּעֵינָיו חֶסֶד יְהוָה? *6:8 But Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord. (NASB)* The word חֶסֶד chesed is interestingly connected in the Tanach to the Davidic promises, faithfulness, the covenant, and truth. The close connection between the covenant and this word חֶסֶד chesed suggests that this word may refer to the “*covenantal grace/mercy*” or “*Covenant of grace/mercy*” which may be why the Hebrew translation of the NT so often uses the word חֶסֶד chesed in its translation of Greek word χάρις (grace). The most significant aspect of these Scriptures is how Moshe seeks to know God, and to know His ways. Moshe is asking the Lord to help him in faithfulness to Him and His word and in doing so finding grace (favor) in the eyes of God. The reward that Rashi speaks of is answered in this verse that the presence of God in the lives of His

people gives rest to His people. *Sforno on Exodus 33:13 part 4*, states “לְמַעַן אֶמְצָא-יְהוָה בְּעֵינָיִךְ, *by possessing such knowledge and an appreciation of Your mode of operation I will myself attain favor in Your eyes. A similar thought has been expressed in Jeremiah 9:23 let the one who wants to boast, boast about the degree of knowledge about Me that he has acquired for I, the Lord, am fond of those who make knowing Me better their principal objective.*” The significance of these rabbinic commentaries is our principle action should be to know the Lord at greater and greater levels for the purpose of applying God’s word to our lives as we grow in our relationship with Him. Does the church today emphasize this aspect of knowing God in and through the application of His word to our lives? If so how? If not, why not? The Bible describes the Lord as having revealed Himself in the commands. Do you understand the significance of God revealing Himself in the commands? This is how the Lord knows us, if we love Him and obey His commands. In addition to this, the Lord God Himself is Grace/Mercy incarnate just as the Scriptures say “*the Lord is חַסֵּד (grace) in all His works*” (see *Tehillim / Psalms 4:3, 86:2, and 145:17*). In order to fully appreciate the concept of the mitzvah and the idea that the Lord God of Israel chose to reveal Himself in the form of the mitzvot (commandments, Laws) we have to consider the context of our lives as His people is to be defined according to God’s Word. This is the very definition of what it means to be a faithful people and to walk in the Spirit of God as Paul describes in his epistles. The most appropriate word that describes what this means is the word shema meaning “*to listen,*” “*to do,*” and “*to obey.*” From this word חַסֵּד chesed we derive the meaning of chasidim, which is the orthodox Judaism understanding of the one who walks in the grace/mercy/favor of God as a righteous and holy person. These words in the Torah which describe the favor, mercy, and grace of God are rich in meaning. The basic conclusion is, we are called to seek the favor, mercy, and grace of God in faith and faithfulness. Moshe described this as knowing God in a more intimate way. All of these things, grace, mercy, and the Lord dwelling in our midst is the context of the festival of Succot. The Lord desires to come and dwell in our midst, to draw near to us. The Torah descriptions of obedience to the mitzvot (commands) define the Lord God in heaven, and His people who bear his testimony both today and on into eternity.



This week we are looking at the Scriptures for Succot from *Shemot* / *Exodus 33:12-34:10*.

Shemot / Exodus 33:12-34:10

33:12 Then Moses said to the Lord, 'See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.' 33:13 'Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.' 33:14 And He said, 'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.' 33:15 Then he said to Him, 'If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. 33:16 'For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?' 33:17 The Lord said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name.' 33:18 Then Moses said, 'I pray You, show me Your glory!' 33:19 And He said, 'I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.' 33:20 But He said, 'You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!' 33:21 Then the Lord said, 'Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; 33:22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. 33:23 'Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.' 34:1 Now the Lord said to Moses, 'Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered. 34:2 'So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain. 34:3 'No

man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain.' 34:4 So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand. 34:5 The Lord descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the Lord. 34:6 Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 34:7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.' 34:8 Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. 34:9 He said, 'If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession.' 34:10 Then God said, 'Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the Lord, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you. (NASB)

יב וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה רְאֵה אֶתְּהָ אָמַר אֵלַי הַעֵל אֶת-הָעַם הַזֶּה וְאֶתְּהָ לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר-תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי וְאֶתְּהָ אֲמַרְתָּ יִדְעֶינִי בְּשֵׁם וְגַם-מִצְאָתָהּ חֵן בְּעֵינָי: יג וְעַתָּה אִם-נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הוֹדַע־נִי נָא אֶת-דַּרְכְּךָ וְאֲדַעַךָ לְמַעַן אֲמַצָּא-חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְרֵאֵה כִּי עַמֶּךָ הִגֹּוֹי הַזֶּה: יד וַיֹּאמֶר פָּנַי יֵלְכוּ וְהִנַּחְתִּי לָךְ: טו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִם-אֵין פְּנִיךָ הַלְכִים אֶל-תַּעֲלֵנוּ מִזֶּה: טז וּבְמָה | יוֹדַע אִפּוֹא כִּי-מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲנִי וְעַמֶּךָ הֲלוֹא בָּלְכָתָהּ עִמָּנוּ וְנִפְלִינוּ אֲנִי וְעַמֶּךָ מִכָּל-הָעַם אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה: פ [רביעי] יז וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה גַם אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֲעֲשֶׂה כִּי-מִצְאָתָהּ חֵן בְּעֵינֶי וְאֲדַעַךָ בְּשֵׁם: יח וַיֹּאמֶר הֲרֵאֵנִי נָא אֶת-כְּבוֹדְךָ: יט וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי אֲעַבִּיר כָּל-טוֹבֵי

על-פְּנֵיךָ וְקָרָאתִי בְשֵׁם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיךָ וַחֲנַנְתִּי אֶת-אֲשֶׁר אָחֵן וְרַחַמְתִּי אֶת-אֲשֶׁר אָרַחֵם: כ וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאוֹת אֶת-פָּנַי כִּי לֹא-יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי: כא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה הִנֵּה מָקוֹם אֲתִי וְנִצַּבְתָּ עַל-הַצּוּר: כב וְהָיָה בְּעֵבֶר כְּבֹדִי וְשַׁמְתִּיךָ בְּנִקְרַת הַצּוּר וְשַׁכַּתִּי כַּפִּי עָלֶיךָ עַד-עֲבָרֶי: כג וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת-כַּפִּי וְרָאִיתָ אֶת-אֲחֵרָי וּפָנַי לֹא יֵרְאוּ: פ [חמ"י-שי] א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה פֶּסֶל-לְךָ שְׁנֵי-לַחַת אֲבָנִים כְּרֹאשֵׁינִים וְכַתְּבֵתִי עַל-הַלַּחַת אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ עַל-הַלַּחַת הַרְּאשֵׁינִים אֲשֶׁר שִׁבַּרְתָּ: ב וְהָיָה נִכוּן לַבִּקּוּר וְעֲלִיתָ בַּבִּקּוּר אֶל-הַר סִינַי וְנִצַּבְתָּ לִּי שָׁם עַל-רֹאשׁ הַהָר: ג וְאִישׁ לֹא-יַעֲלֶה עִמָּךָ וְגַם-אִישׁ אֶל-יִרְאָ בְּכָל-הָהָר גַּם-הַצֹּאֵן וְהַבִּקּוּר אֶל-יָרְעוּ אֶל-מוֹל הַהָר הַהוּא: ד וַיִּפְסַל שְׁנֵי-לַחַת אֲבָנִים כְּרֹאשֵׁינִים וַיִּשְׁכֵּם מֹשֶׁה בַּבִּקּוּר וַיַּעַל אֶל-הַר סִינַי כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ וַיִּקַּח בְּיָדוֹ שְׁנֵי לַחַת אֲבָנִים: ה וַיֵּרֶד יְהוָה בְּעָנָן וַיִּתְיַצֵּב עִמּוֹ שָׁם וַיִּקְרָא בְשֵׁם יְהוָה: ו וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה | עַל-פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה | יְהוָה אֶל רַחֲוִים וַחֲנוּן אֶרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חֶסֶד וְאַמֶּת: ז נִצַּר חֶסֶד לְאֶל־פִּים נִשְׂא עֹן וּפְשַׁע וַחֲטָאָה וְנִקָּה לֹא יִנְקָה פֶקֶד | עֹן אָבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים וְעַל-בָּנִים עַל-שְׁלֵשִׁים וְעַל-רַבְעִים: ח וַיִּמְהַר מֹשֶׁה וַיִּקַּד אַרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ: ט וַיֹּאמֶר אִם-נָא מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי יְיָ-נָא אֲדֹנָי בְּקַרְבְּנוֹ כִּי עִם-קָדְשָׁה-עֲרַף הוּא וּסְלַחְתָּ לְעֹונֵנוּ וּלְחַטָּאתֵנוּ וּנְחַלְתָּנוּ: [ששי] י וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי כֹרֵת בְּרִית נֶגֶד כָּל-עַמָּךָ אֲעֲשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִבְרָאוּ בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הַגּוֹיִם וְרָאָה כָּל-הָעָם אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה בְּקִרְבּוֹ אֶת-מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה כִּי-נִוְרָא הוּא אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי עֹשֶׂה עִמָּךָ:

יב This week's Torah Portion states, וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה רְאֵה אֶתָּה, אִמֵּר אֵלַי הַעֲלֵ אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה וְאַתָּה לֹא הוֹדַעְתָּנִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר-תִּשְׁלַח עִמִּי וְאַתָּה אֲמַרְתָּ יָדַעְתִּיךָ בְשֵׁם וְגַם-מִצָּאתָ חֵן בְּעֵינָי: יג וְעַתָּה אִם-נָא מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵי-נֶיךָ הוֹדַעְנִי נָא אֶת-דְּרָכְךָ וְאֲדַעַךָ לְמַעַן אֲמַצָּא-חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְרָאָה כִּי עִמָּךָ הַגּוֹי: *Then Moses said to the Lord, 'See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people!' But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me. Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight.'* 33:13 *'Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people.'* 33:14 *And He*

said, *'My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.'* (NASB) What we learn from these Scriptures is Moshe's defining the meaning of *"faithfulness,"* to seek to draw near to the Lord God of Israel at a greater level, to know Him by walking in His ways, and in doing so finding His grace. This is the biblical context of the word חסד chesed that is connected with the Davidic promises, faithfulness, the covenant, and truth. The word חסד chesed draws in the concept of *"covenantal grace/mercy"* or *"Covenant of grace/mercy"* and is why the Hebrew translation of the NT so often uses the word חסד chesed in its translation of Greek word χάρις (grace). This is also why Paul writes of the obedience of the faith in *Romans 15:17-18* and *16:26-27*, because faith creates faithfulness in our lives. There is no salvation without faith and faithfulness to the Lord God in heaven and His Messiah Yeshua! The gospel message is connected to obeying God. This is why Paul has been hindered from coming to the Romans, because the obedience of the gospel is vitally important. Examining the epistles of Paul, he always taught obedience that comes from the faith is the fruit of the Spirit which demonstrates our faithfulness in our Father in heaven and in His Messiah Yeshua. If we consider all of Scripture and the truthfulness of these things we have been discussing, this stands against the faith alone teachings we find in the church today! If these things are true, what are the implications for us today? (see *Matthew 7*) Based upon *Matthew 7*, there is a doctrine that is being taught that is sending millions of Christians to hell!

The rabbis understand chesed (grace) from the Torah in the following way.

Chizkuni, Exodus 33:13 Part 1

הוֹדִיעֵנִי נָא אֶת דַּרְכֶיךָ, *"please instruct me in Your ways."*
Moses wished G-d to instruct Him of His attributes. Once he had been instructed in those, he would be able to determine if he wished for the Jewish people to be led by one or more of G-d's attributes or by His essence. (B'chor Shor)

Part 2

וְאֵדַעְךָ, *"so that I will know You more intimately and be*

able to cleave to You more closely;” As result, I will be able to find favor in Your eyes.

Moshe uses the word וַיֵּדַע to describe the intent of his words, to know the Lord God at a more intimate level. This is the point of the mitzvot (commands). Our short comings and failures in keeping perfectly His Torah, we learn about ourselves, and we learn about the Lord in heaven, and most importantly, about His mercy and grace which draws us back to repentance again and again in our lives. Note how the commentary Chizkuni says *“to be led by one or more of God’s attributes or by His essence.”* The attributes of God are His commands, the essence of God is his mercy/grace. This is a question that is opened for discussion by the rabbis here in the commentary. The Apostolic Writings says we are led by God’s grace, which is what leads us to repentance, and turning from our ways of sin to His ways of righteousness in the commands. The rabbinic commentary is very consistent with the writings of the New Testament!

Rashi interprets Moshe’s words in the following way:

Rashi on Exodus 33:13 Part 2

וַיֵּדַע לְמַעַן אֲמַצָּא הוּא בְעֵינַי means, that I may know by this (by Your letting me know Your way) the nature of the reward You bestow — what is this “finding of grace” which You have granted to me (Hebrew: which I found in Your eyes). The explanation of לְמַעַן אֲמַצָּא accordingly is: that I may find out (אֲמַצָּא) how great is the reward attendant on this “finding of grace”.

Rashi speaks of knowing the way of God, the reward for knowing God’s ways is the finding of the grace of God. Note how Rashi understands faith and faithfulness go hand in hand which is why the gospel message is connected to the obedience of the faith (obeying God). Notice how it is the Lord God Almighty who makes His ways known to us, just as Rabbeinu Bahya comments saying in the following commentary.

Rabbeinu Bahya, Shemot 33:13:1-9

הוֹדִיעֵנִי נָא אֶת דְּרֹכֶיךָ, “make Your ways known to me.”

According to the plain meaning of the text the word דָּרָךְ means “Your attributes.” The “ways” of the Lord are His attributes, His virtues. This is the way David used the expression in Psalms 103,7 where he wrote יוֹדִיעַ דַּרְכָיו לְמֹשֶׁה, “He would make Moses conversant with His attributes.” The fact is that in that psalm David immediately proceeds to list these attributes of the Lord, such as רַחוּם וְחַנוּן ה’ אֲרֵךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב חַסֵּד, “the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger abounding in steadfast love.” Moses attempted to gain an understanding of G’d’s essence by means of being told His attributes. G’d’s activities were to be the clue to understanding His essence. G’d responded to him in the following way: “I will allow all My goodness to pass before you” (verse 19). Moses’ second request, i.e. הֲרֹאֵנִי נָא אֶת כְּבוֹדְךָ, “let me see Your glory” (verse 19), was denied. In response to this second request G’d told Moses that it is not given to mortal man to have a vision of G’d’s glory while alive.

Rabbeinu Bahya parallels the ways of God to *Tehillim / Psalms 103* speaking of the way David expresses the psalm by recognizing the attributes of God in mercy, compassion, grace, and abounding love for His people. The mercy, compassion, grace, and abounding love of God are called the activities of God, this is what He does for us and is how we understand his essence. The festival of Succot speaks of the Lord dwelling in our midst and going with us. It isn’t us but Him who lives in us that enables us to live and to bear His testimony in the midst of an evil world.

As we study the Scriptures and ponder the significance of Succot and the Lord dwelling in our midst, we must access our lives, our faith, and our faithfulness before God. The rabbis consider these things in the Midrash Tehillim 125 Part 5 which opens saying, *“But as for those who note a turning aside unto crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity (Tehillim / Psalms 125:5).”* The midrash continues saying, *“Rabbi Joshua son of Levi taught, Any man who gossips about a lapse of disciples of the wise will fall into Gehen-*

na, for it is said, But as for those who note a turning aside unto crooked ways, the Lord will lead them away with the workers of iniquity.” The midrash speaks of the possibility of turning from God’s ways to the ways of wickedness and of the one who does so the Lord will lead him away with the workers of iniquity. Note how they say such a person will fall into Gehenna (hell), and such a person is the one who gossips. This is related to whether our faith will produce faithfulness in our lives. So the question is, *“Our salvation, is it dependent upon our faithfulness to God?”* This is a very important question because of the nature of *“faithfulness”* before God which is related to how we live our lives, our seeking the Lord and His kingdom each day. The Talmud Bavli Sota 14a-36a states the following:

Talmud Bavli Sota 14a-36a

ואמר רבי חמא ברבי חנינא מאי דכתיב (דברים יג, ה) אחריו ה' אלהיכם תלכו וכי אפשר לו לאדם להלך אחר שכינה והלא כבר נאמר (דברים ז, כד) כי ה' אלהיך אש אוכלת הוא

And Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, says: What is the meaning of that which is written: “After the Lord your God shall you walk, and Him shall you fear, and His commandments shall you keep, and unto His voice shall you hearken, and Him shall you serve, and unto Him shall you cleave” (Deuteronomy 13:5)? But is it actually possible for a person to follow the Divine Presence? But hasn’t it already been stated: “For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 4:24), and one cannot approach fire.

Our walk before God is not an easy task which is described as the presence of God being a devouring fire. The easy thing to do is to sin and disregard the ways of God. The more difficult path is to walk in His ways in righteousness, holiness, and truth. Without His help and the help of His Messiah Yeshua, this would be near impossible to do.

In the midrash, the rabbis speak of the wisdom of the wise saying the application of God’s word is wisdom, and use the example, of the application of Torah to stealing, where one must return what was stolen

in order to be reconciled before God. Eternal life is God's gift to us. It is not something any of us deserve but the Lord does set certain conditions for us to receive this gift. Because of this, it is vitally important to our relationship with God and to our future that we understand this! There are verses in the Bible that tell us those who endure to the end will be saved (*Matthew 10:22, 24:13*) and that if you hold fast to the word which is preached, then you'll be saved (*1 Corinthians 15:1-2*) which is a repetition of the Torah command to hold fast to the Lord, to the Word of God, and to the commands. In addition to this, the Apostolic Writings teach us that the unbeliever cannot receive spiritual things (*1 Corinthians 2:14*). This means that he cannot believe them of his own sinful nature which is enslaved to sin (*Romans 6:14-20*). Once we are created new (*2 Corinthians 5:17*), we are able to exercise our faith in God. This is important because it suggests that our believing is the work of God, at least at the beginning of our faith walk before God. Our believing is also dependent upon our remaining in God's Word and seeking the Lord God in heaven. The question though is whether a persons faithfulness is a by-product of the Lord working in our lives or something we must work at? As we continue to live our lives for the Lord each day, we choose to continue to believe, but are we going to automatically be faithful and live our lives for Him simply because we have faith? The midrash suggests that it is possible for a person of faith, which is called a wise man, to turn aside unto crooked ways.

We have heard it taught, *“salvation, eternal life, is God's gift by grace, His loving disposition of favor and acceptance toward us, as it says in Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* Now salvation is God's gift, unearned and undeserved. Just as the Scriptures state, no one will ever be able to boast that he or she has earned or deserves the gift of eternal life. Salvation however does not stop at simple belief and grace. The question is whether we can we do things, or not do things, that disqualify us from receiving this gift of eternal life from God? The answer to this question is crucial to our relationship with God and to our future! Both the Torah (and all of the Tanach) and the Apostolic Writings reveal to us that God sets certain conditions for receiving salvation. Meeting these conditions will enable us to receive that gift, while disregarding and

failing to meet them will disqualify us from receiving it. This is what the midrash is speaking of here. The Apostolic Writings speak of the authority for receiving eternal life is God's Word and His Messiah Yeshua, and repentance. *Hebrews 5:8-9*, speaks of Yeshua as the author of our salvation, *"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."* This is amplified by Yeshua's statements in *Matthew 7:21* where he says, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."* Yeshua makes it clear that merely acknowledging Him as Lord and Master, saying *"Lord, Lord,"* is not sufficient. In order to inherit the Kingdom of God, we must do something. He says we must do the will of the Father. Yeshua wants us to understand that there is more to receiving eternal life than just a belief system or a mental acceptance. False teachers of the gospel message promote that sort of apostasy! Our conviction that He is our Savior must be more than just a warm, comforting thought or intellectual concept. Yeshua warns that simply calling on His name or recognizing Him as *"Lord"* is NOT enough. Even the demons believe but yet are not saved! We see this illustrated in the story of the wealthy young ruler who asked what he must do to receive eternal life (*Matthew 19:16*). Yeshua's response was obedience to the Torah and to give up his wealth because it had become an idol. (Yeshua responded saying, *"If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."*) Note that Yeshua did not answer that nothing is required other than believing in God or in Him. He told the young man he must obey the commandments of God to receive the gift of eternal life. This is plain and simple. The Christian argument would be *"but nobody can keep the commands."* Was Yeshua speaking of perfect obedience? Yeshua believed and taught on the importance of repentance that is coupled to applying God's Torah to our lives! The apostle James points out, belief is pointless unless it is backed up by action and obedience saying, *"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble"* (*James 2:19*). If we think that belief is all we need for salvation, we are sorely mistaken. As James tells us, the demonic spirits fully believe in the existence of the one true God and they believe in the power of name of Yeshua God's Messiah. They further know that Yeshua is the Son

of God raised from the dead. The demons belief in this regard doesn't mean they are saved! Why does modern Christianity today teach that it does mean they are saved who just believe? James goes on to explain that faith, belief, and trust in God, and obedience (faithfulness) go hand in hand saying, *“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?”* (James 2:20-22). James thus explained that works of obedience as a result of our faithfulness our relationship with God and which leads to greater faith and obedience, as God requires. Without works as evidence of our faith, that faith is dead, worthless, and useless.

How these things relate to the Torah command, is in the humbling of our lives before God. The Lord God of Israel expects us to surrender our lives in return for His mercy and grace, as Yeshua stated in *Luke 14:26-27* *“If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me.”* This concept of carrying the cross is dying to self, and having a commitment to the Messiah and to the living God and Father in heaven. Our commitment to the Messiah and to God is to be our principle action. This is coupled to knowing the Lord at greater and greater levels by the application of God's word to our lives as we grow in our relationship with Him. This is very similar to what Sferno wrote in his commentary. The idea of being willing to bear the cross is the willingness to be faithful in following in the footsteps of Yeshua. Note in *Luke 14:28-33*, Yeshua warned us to be careful that accepting the gift of eternal life comes at the highest cost, saying *“no one can become my disciple without giving up everything for me.”* (NLT) Yeshua willingly gave his life for us, and so we too must be willing to give our lives to follow Him. So returning to the title of this article, *“Is Faithfulness Required for Eternal Life?”* The answer is clearly is yes. God's Word spells out certain conditions for us, as the author of Hebrews wrote, *Hebrews 2:3* that we not to *“neglect so great a salvation.”*

These words in the Torah which describe the favor, mercy, and grace of God are rich in meaning. The basic conclusion is, we are

called to seek the Lord and His favor, mercy, and grace for our lives. Moshe described this as knowing God in a more intimate way that is coupled to our applying God's Word to our lives. If we are not actively determining our hearts and lives to do so (to apply God's word to our lives), what kind of faith does one have? All of these things, grace, mercy, and the Lord dwelling in our midst is the context of the festival of Succot. As we celebrate Succot this year, let us think upon these things because of the promise of God and His presence dwelling in our midst and going before us. The Torah descriptions of obedience to the mitzvot (commands) define the Lord God in heaven, and His people who bear his testimony both today and on into eternity.

